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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 004530

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SUBJECT: MCNS DECEMBER 10

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S//REL GBR AUS) SUMMARY: During the December 10 Ministerial Council on National Security, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki asked for options to rapidly restore security to the area around the Bayji Oil Refinery so that production may resume. Ministers also discussed increasing prison security after Saddam Hussein's nephew escaped from Baddush Prison. Deputy National Security Advisor Al-Safi reported that Ansar Al Sunnah was responsible for producing a climate of intimidation in Iraqi universities that deterred most students from attending class. Minister of Defense Abdul Qader outlined his new plan to strengthen Baghdad Security by reinforcing police stations. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (S//REL GBR AUS) Maliki pointed to the need to move quickly to resume production of refined product at the Bayji Oil Refinery, which has been halted due to security concerns in the area. He said that the nearby town of Suniyah was cordoned off after foreign fighters took refuge in the town. Work at the nearby refinery and power plant had stopped as a result. Defense Minister Mufraji explained that food was being sent into town and civilians being allowed to leave, but admitted that there is a possibility of collateral damage if troops enter the town in pursuit of the foreign fighters. Maliki called for a decision to be taken on whether to enter the town and search for the fugitives or to lift the cordon in an effort to get the refinery quickly back into production. General Casey undertook to provide courses of action for the Prime Minister's consideration.

BAGHDAD SECURITY

¶3. (S//REL GBR AUS) During the weekly briefing on Baghdad security, Minister of Defense Abdul Qader laid out new plans to enhance the capabilities of Baghdad police stations. The MOD said that stronger manning and better communications would enable stations to more actively patrol and respond to problems in Baghdad's neighborhoods. He said that police stations would contain a mix of Iraqi Army, Police and Coalition force troops. Prime Minister Maliki underlined the importance of quick reaction capabilities and active intelligence-driven raids on insurgent targets.

¶4. (S//REL GBR AUS) Abdul Qader said that while some additional materiel was required -- such as additional night vision goggles -- he hoped to achieve security without coalition assistance in some areas, such as Ghazaliyah. This would allow coalition forces to pull back. General Casey said it would be useful to test and evaluate new approaches in a defined area. Maliki said the stress on stronger checkpoints, raids and quick reaction capability was consonant with his own thinking and asked for a detailed briefing in coming days. He said that if the new approach worked, it could be applied first in Baghdad, then in other

provinces.

PRISON PROBLEMS

15. (S//REL GBR AUS) Turning to the recent escape of Saddam Ayman Al-Sabawi, the Minister of Justice said that a prison service captain had helped Al-Sabawi escape and the Deputy Governor of Baddush Prison had been arrested on suspicion of involvement. He called the Iraqi Corrections Service "one hundred percent corrupt" and described it as plagued by sectarianism. He described other recent escapes that had taken place with assistance from corrections officials. The problem, he said, centered on loyalties: this was the same problem that was destroying Iraq. He needed temporary coalition assistance with security and described his efforts to cope with the situation. Prisoners were being transferred to the more secure facility at Susse. Ministers discussed various options for creating additional secure prisons, such as converting castles in Kurdistan into prisons.

CORRUPTION FIGHTING

16. (S//REL GBR AUS) The Commanding General of the Armed Forces, General Babakar complained about the activities of the Corruption Board of Investigation, which he said was arresting military officers for not appearing to testify and other petty reasons. Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh suggested that someone new be named to head the CBI; he could be nominated in the Ministerial Council on National Security and confirmed by the Presidential Council on National Security. Maliki agreed that the incumbent is rude and harsh in his personal dealings. Barham Saleh commented that the CBI was seeking PCNS approval to arrest ex-Minister Thamer, causing Maliki to opine that the CBI was exceeding its

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mandate and arresting Iraqis without strong evidence. Maliki asserted that the CBI was basing arrests on information from the internet. Minister of State for National Security Waili drew laughs by claiming that one Iraqi Army general officer had been arrested by the CBI for misusing his cell phone.
KHALILZAD